



Ayin Hara

להצלחת ניסים בן בריתה



Is it real or not?

Halachic rulings that are to prevent Ayin Hara

Why is there a concept of ayin hara?

How does it work?

Is there a preventative?

In Our Daily Tefilot- we ask to be spared from Ayin Hara:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלקי ואלקי אבותי, שתצילני היום ובכל יום...מעין הרע

May it be Your will, Hashem, the G-d of my fathers, that you protect me on this day and every day...from Ayin Hara.

Right path in life to choose,

Pirkei Avot 2:10

**אמר להם: צאו וראו איזוהי דרך ישרה שידבק בה האדם. רבי אליעזר אומר עין טובה...אמר להם
צאו וראו איזוהי דרך רעה שיתרחק ממנה האדם. רבי אליעזר אומר עין רעה...**

[Rabbi Yochanan] said to [his students]: Go and see which is the best trait for a person to acquire.

Said Rabbi Eliezer: A good eye.... He said to them: Go and see which is the worst trait, the one that a person should most distance himself from. Said Rabbi Eliezer: An evil eye (Ayin Ra'ah).

This indicates that a good and evil eye are not just supernatural phenomena that cause harm or blessing, but an attitude that we bring to the things that we see (something we personally can avoid or aspire to).

Cause of Insanity

Rabbi Yehoshua teaches that an Ayin Hara can drive a person insane:

Pirkei Avot 2:11

רבי יהושע אומר: עין הרע, ויצר הרע, ושנאת הבריות, מוציאים את האדם מן העולם

Rabbi Yehoshua would say: An evil eye, the evil inclination, and the hatred of one's fellows, drive a person from the world.

When a person is jealous of others (which is the cause of an Ayin Hara), filled with desire (Yetzer Hara) and hatred, they are driven to insanity, because instead of appreciating what they have, they feel empty and are left wanting.

On the other hand, a person with a good eye who is satisfied with what he has and is benevolent to others will be happy and filled with gratitude for the portion in life that Hashem has granted him.

In Halachah

Judaism, interest in Ayin Hara is not limited to the realm of personal development; there are rulings in Shulchan Aruch in effect today that were instituted in order to avoid scenarios in which people might cast an evil eye and bring harm upon others.

1. Calling Two Brothers to the Torah

Immediate family members do not get called up to the Torah in succession:

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 141:6

יכולים לקרות ב' אחים זה אחר זה והבן אחר האב, ואין מניחים אלא בשביל עין הרע ;

Two brothers may be called to the Torah one after the other, and a son after his father, however, practically we do not allow it because of an Ayin Hara.

Because very few members of the community are afforded the privilege of being given an aliyah to the Torah each time the Torah is read, if we were to honor two immediate family members in succession, it may arouse the jealousy of the congregation and lead them to cast an Ayin Hara.

2. Publicizing a Pregnancy

Many avoid announcing a pregnancy (beyond close family) until the fifth month to avoid people casting an Ayin Hara.

First of all,

We are told that Sarah Imeinu cast an Ayin Hara upon her maidservant Hagar during an early stage of Hagar's pregnancy, causing her to miscarry.

Rashi, Bereishit 16:5

הכניסה עין הרע בעיבורה של הגר והפילה עובריה, הוא שהמלאך אומר להגר הנך הרה, והלא כבר הרתה והוא מבשר לה שתהר, אלא מלמד שהפילה הריון הראשון:

[Sarah] cast an Ayin Hara on Hagar's pregnancy, and she miscarried. That is why the malach said to Hagar, "Behold, you will conceive." But was she not already pregnant? Yet he announces to her that she will conceive? Rather this teaches that she miscarried her first pregnancy.

- ✓ There is also a custom to hang a Shir Hamaalot above the doorway of the room of the mother and baby during and following childbirth as a protection from Ayin Hara.

More importantly,

Hidden Blessings

In order to get a better understanding of how an Ayin Hara works, let us look at what is arguably the best way to avoid an Ayin Hara—namely, staying under the radar:

Taanit 8b

אין הברכה מצויה...אלא בדבר הסמוי מן העין

Blessing is only found...on something that is hidden from sight.

The Gemara advises to keep things private and hidden as a recipe for blessing. The Gemara learns this from the following posuk:

Devarim 28:8

יצו ה' את הברכה באסמך

Hashem will order the blessing to be with you.

Ba'asomecha (in your granaries). Granaries are not open for all to see, they are considered a discrete place. Moreover, the word “ba’a’samecha” —“in your granaries” is related to the word “samui”— hidden. The Gemara understands from this posuk that Hashem’s blessings are found on things that are hidden from sight.

In the Zohar it is written that all blessing comes from a discrete source:

Zohar, Parshat Noach 64b

סתים הוא אתר דכל ברכאן נפקי מתמן

The hidden realm is the place where all blessings emanate from.

Sefer Chareidim 66:90

בראותו חבירו בטוב עין הוא יברך וישפיע טוב לחברו וגם יבורך ולהיפך להיפך בר מינה, דכתיב (משלי כב,ט) “טוב עין הוא יבורך”, וקרי יברך

When one sees another with a good eye, he bestows blessing and draws good upon his friend and he too is blessed. And the opposite is true as well. As it is stated (Mishlei 22:9), “one with a good eye should be blessed” and it can be read “shall bless.”

The word “yevorach” (which means “is blessed”) can be read “yevarech,” (which means “shall bless”). The posuk would then mean that with a simple look at another person, you have the ability to bless them. Unfortunately, this doesn’t only work for blessing, but for the opposite of blessing as well.

3. Chattan and Kallah:

A Chattan and Kallah are prone to an Ayin Hara in the days before the Chasunah. This is why some have a custom for the Chattan and Kallah not to go out in public without a shomer (an escort) for protection.

This is also why a kallah wears a veil to cover her face during the chupah, so as to avoid Ayin Hara of onlookers.

We also do not perform or recite one set of berachot (birkat ha'eirusin and sheva berachot) to cover for multiple chatanim and kaalot at the same time to avoid Ayin Hara

4. Tashlich:

On Rosh Hashanah, we visit a body of water, preferably with fish, and recite tashlich (certain pesukim corresponding to Hashem's 13 middot harachamim), because fish remain inconspicuous under water, an Ayin Hara has no power over them. One of the primary reasons for Tashlich is to pray that, like fish, we should be spared from Ayin Hara.

Shulchan Aruch Harav 583:7

ונוהגים לילך אל הנהר שיש בו דגים חיים לסימן שלא תשלוט בנו עין הרע

We are accustomed to go to a river that has live fish as an omen that no Ayin Hara should influence us.

Like Fish This can be further understood from the beracha Yaakov gave to Yoseph's two sons, Menasheh and Ephraim. He blessed them to "multiply like fish" (Bereishit 48:16).

The Gemara understands this to mean the following:

Berachot 20a

וידגו לרב בקרב הארץ מה דגים שבים מים מכסין עליהם ואין עין הרע שולטת בהם - אף זרעו של יוסף אין עין הרע שולטת בהם.

"They will multiply like fish in the land" (Bereishit 48:16)—just as the water conceals fish and an Ayin Hara does not influence them, similarly, an Ayin Hara cannot influence the descendants of Yoseph.

5. Good Looks

Dressing up kids in a way that draws attention, or even dressing oneself in such a way:

When Yaakov's sons first traveled to Mitzrayim to purchase food during the seven-year famine, Yaakov told them to beware of an Ayin Hara upon entering Mitzrayim, knowing that they were strong and handsome young boys who would have people turning their heads. They therefore entered the capital city through separate gates so as to remain no conspicuous.

אמר יעקב לבניו אתם גבורים, אתם נאים, אל תכנסו בשער אחד ואל תעמדו במקום אחד שלא תשלוט בכם עין הרע

Yaakov told his sons: "You are handsome. Do not enter through one gate and do not congregate in one place so no Ayin Hara will have influence over you."

6. Counting people

For this reason, we avoid counting people in order not to arouse an Ayin Hara, because by counting you reveal that which is hidden (before something is counted its sum—and therefore its measure of success—is not known):

Midrash Tanchuma Ki Sisa 31

הלוחות ראשונות על שנתנו בפומבי לפיכך שלטה בהם עין הרע ונשתברו

The first set of luchot were given publicly, they were therefore affected by an Ayin Hara and were broken.

Shulchan Aruch Harav, Orach Chaim 156:15

אסור למנות את ישראל אפילו אינו מתכוין רק להטיל גורל על איזה סכום ומספר ואפילו לדבר מצוה אלא מוציאים אצבעותיהם ומונים האצבעות .

It is forbidden to count jews, even if his only intention is to determine an amount or number, even for the sake of performing a mitzvah, instead, they should extend their fingers and the fingers are counted.

This is why Hashem instructed Moshe to count the jews by instructing them to donate a machatzit hashekel to the mishkan:

Abrabanel, Nachlat Avot 2:11

חשש הקב"ה לנגף הנופל במנין מפאת העין הרע. ולכן צוה שיעשו אותה צדקה כדי שבזכותה ינצלו בדרך השגחה מאותו הזק

Hashem was concerned about a plague that can result from counting due to an Ayin Hara. He therefore instructed that they give [the coin] as tzedakah in order that in its merit they will be saved from harm.

7. Seeing Another's Success

The following Halachah (originally from the Gemarah) is a precautionary measure against casting an Ayin Hara upon the yield of another's farm or upon anything that represents a colleague's success:

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 183:6

אסור לעמוד על שדה חבירו להסתכל בה בשעה שהיא עומדת בקמותיה, שלא יזיקנה בעין הרע. ומכל שכן שאסור להסתכל בחבירו בעיני שיש לחוש שיזיקו בעין הרע.

It is forbidden to stand and look at a colleague's field of standing grain, lest one damage it with an Ayin Hara. Surely, it is forbidden to gaze on a person in a manner that might arouse the influence of an Ayin Hara.

Nowadays, this would apply to paying excessive attention to someone's success, be it their business, property, possessions, or in any other area that may lead to casting an Ayin Hara.

The Gemarah says it is forbidden to stand and look at a colleague's success. What source is there in the Torah for such a prohibition?

This is subject to a Machloket of Rishonim:

According to the Rambam, the prohibition against standing in a colleagues field is not from the Torah at all. In fact, the term "osur" ("forbidden") is only used loosely, referring to an issue that is merely a matter of chassidut (piety).

Shut HaRambam 395 Ayin Hara = A Matter of Piety

הא דאמרינן שלא יראה אדם בקמת חברו משום עינא בישא, אלו דברי חסידות הם שלא יעיין בו בעין הרע

That which the Sages said that one should not look at a colleague's field of standing grain because of an Ayin Hara, these are words of piety that he should not look at it with an evil eye.

"Do Not Covet"

While the Rambam maintains that refraining from entering into situations in which one may be tempted to cast an Ayin Hara is only a stringency, there are opinions that maintain this prohibition in fact has a source in the Torah.

R' Yaakov ben Chananel Skili (14th Century), a close disciple of the Rashba, is one such opinion:

Torat Haminchah, Mishpatim 25

בלא תחמוד תלוי כל היזק שיבוא לאדם מחברו על ידי ראיית העין

Every damage that a person brings upon his colleague by way of seeing with the eye is a derivative of "Lo Tachmod" ("Do not covet").

Jealousy is what inspires an Ayin Hara. When people are jealous of each other, they cannot stand the other's success to the extent that it is not beneath them to wish harm upon their fellow. Coveting a neighbor's belongings is an Issur Deoraitah and is counted as the tenth of the Aseret hadibrot.

Perhaps the reason why the Zohar associates blessing with privacy is because Elokut—the source of all blessing—is hidden in this world. It is therefore necessary to maintain privacy in order to remain connected to the source of blessing. Thus, the effect of an Ayin Hara is only possible when one removes themselves from this place of privacy that is connected with blessing. This concept of the good eye being associated with connectedness to Hashem, and an Ayin Hara, with separateness, is expressed in the explanation for how one blesses and harms by way of a good or evil eye:

Severity of an Ayin Hara

What the above halachot indicate, is that in Judaism, Ayin Hara is seen as a very real phenomenon, and Chazal took it very seriously. In fact, they said:

How do you bless someone by looking benevolently upon them? The Maggid of Mezrich explains that it has to do with seeing things as they are before Hashem (in the case of a good eye), or as they stand separate from Elokut (in the case of an Ayin Hara):

Ohr HaTorah, Maggid of Mezritch p. 192

**ומי שהוא טוב עי"ן...כשהוא מסתכל בדבר מביא ברכה באותו דבר לפי שהוא יודע שהדבר ההוא כאין נגדו
יתברך דהיינו שהוא באמת אפם ואי"ן בלתי אלקותו ית' השרוי בתוכו...וכן להיפך ח"ו מי שהוא רע עי"ן
כשהוא מסתכל על הדבר אומר מה נאה דבר זה ועושה אותו הדבר לדבר בפני עצמו...נפרד אותו הדבר
מהשורש ומחיות אלקות שבו**

When a person who has a good eye makes an observation, he invites blessing into whatever he observes because he knows that it is considered as naught before Hashem, i.e., that it is truly nothing without the Elokut that rests within it....The same is true in the opposite scenario, when one who has an evil eye makes an observation, he says "how beautiful this thing is!" turning it into an entity of its own and separating it from the Divine source and vitality within it.

The power of an Ayin Hara is not (only) in that it sees evil in everything, but that it sees and considers everything as existing independently of its Divine source. Seeing things as they are connected to Hashem brings blessing, whereas seeing them as being separate from Hashem can bring about the opposite of blessing, Rachmanah Litzlan.

The Color Blue

Zohar Vol. 3 163b

אית לון עינא בישא לאסתכלא וכד מסתכלין זמין לעינייהו גוון תכלא ולא יכלא עינייהו לשלטאה

This is why the Zohar prescribes the color blue as a remedy to save a person from the harm of an Ayin Hara.

[Certain beings] have the capacity to cast an Ayin Hara. When they look your way, prepare before your eyes the color blue and their eyes will have no influence over you.

Why the color blue? The Gemara explains the significance of blue regarding the blue string on tzitzit:

Sotah 17a

דומה לים וים דומה לרקיע ורקיע דומה לכסא הכבוד היה ר"מ אומר מה נשתנה תכלת מכל מיני צבעונין מפני שהתכלת

Rabbi Meir would say: Why is the color blue different to all other colors? Because blue is similar to the color of the sea, and the color of the sea is similar to the color of the sky, which is similar to Hashem's Kisei Hakavod (Throne of Glory).

The Gemara explains that this is why we are instructed to wear a blue string on our tzitzit. The function of tzitzit is to be a continual reminder of Hashem's presence in our lives and a reminder to perform mitzvot. When one sees the color blue, one is reminded of the heavens and remembers to be a good Jew and fulfill their mission in this world by performing mitzvot. By staying mission-focused, one avoids (both casting and being a recipient of) an Ayin Hara.

Rabbeinu Yonah, Avot 2:11

החומד מכל אשר לרעהו, אויר עולה מן המחשבה ההוא ושורף את הדברים שעויין בהם בעיניו הרע, גם בקרבו ישרף אחר שמתאווה לדברים שאין יכולת מצוי בידו לעשות

[When one covets] anything that belongs to a colleague, an energy is transmitted from that thought which takes hold of the things that he looked at with his evil eyes; and it also burns inside of him [i.e., the one who covets], because he desires that which he does not have the ability to carry out.

Eye of the Mind

The Miteler Rebbe explains that an Ayin Hara is not caused by the physical act of seeing, but by the mental image that it creates:

Torat Chaim, Bereishit 114:b

מהו עיני ראייה והסתכלות זאת דא"א לומר שזהו ראייה והסתכלות העין הגשמי דמה יש בכח העין הגשמי לראות לטוב או לרע אחר שאין שכל וטעם בהגשמת העין בראי' גשמית כו' אלא בהכרח צ"ל שזהו בחי' ראי' הרוחנית של השכל שנק' עין השכל

What is this "seeing"? You cannot say that it is in the vision of the physical eye, for what power does the physical eye have to cause good or evil by way of its vision? This is because there is no intelligence and reason in the physical eye. Rather, this necessarily refers to a spiritual vision of the intellect called "the eye of the mind." A Silent Prayer Some understand an Ayin Hara to be a prayer that is sent heavenward when one witnesses an injustice. This is how Former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Doron, explains how an Ayin Hara operates.

Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi Doron, Binyan Av, Bereishit

בעין, אדם רואה ובוחן את מצבו של הזולת. כשאדם במצוקה, המראה מעורר רחמים שיש בהם כעין בקשה ותפילה להיטיב למצב. ואם הרואה שונא את המצטער, יש בראיית הצער בכדי לשמח את הרואה ולעורר רצון להוסיף מכאוב...כשאדם רואה הצלחה של הזולת, אם שונא הוא לו, הראייה מעוררת קנאה ורגשות של תביעה כנגד ההצלחה. רגשות שבלב האדם יש בהם מעין תפילה ורצון לבטל את ההצלחה ולא לראותה

With one's eye, a person sees and judges the situation of another. When a person is in distress, the image arouses mercy which includes a type of plea and prayer to improve the situation. If the observer despises the person in distress, his observation of the distress brings him joy and arouses a wish to amplify the distress...when a person sees another's success, if he despises him, the observation arouses feelings of jealousy and claims against the success, the feelings in a person's heart contain within them a type of prayer and wish to be rid of the success and not to see it.

How Does One Protect Against an Ayin Hara?

As explained earlier, the best way to thwart an Ayin Hara is by being modest, not flaunting one's success, and trying to stay away from the public eye as much as possible. Bli Ayin Hara Often, when you hear Jews speaking about their children or their success they will say "bli ayin hara" or "kein ayin hara" or the shortened version "keina hora" which mean "without an Ayin Hara." What does this do?

Chida, Tziporen Shamir 172

המספר שבח אדם בחכמה או עושר או בנים וכיוצא חייב לברכו שלא ישלוט בו עין הרע

One who speaks the praises of a person's wisdom, wealth, children, and the like, is obligated to bless him that an Ayin Hara should have no power over him.

Saying "Bli Ayin Hara" serves as a kind of blessing and prayer that no evil eye should harm him. This applies whenever a person brings attention to one's blessings.

Some Sefaradim say "ben porat yosef" from the posuk in Bereishit where Yaakov blesses Yoseph that he will not be subject to an Ayin Hara. Don't Let it Trouble You A classical, contemporary approach is based on a saying in the Gemarah with regards to omens, that it is best not to worry too much about these things, because if you are not too troubled by it, it will not trouble you.

"Poo, Poo, Poo"

Additionally, some make spitting sounds "poo, poo, poo" to ward off an Ayin Hara. While it may seem silly, this practice is sourced in Torah. Midrash Rabbah recounts a story of a woman who would attend Rabbi Meir's Torah classes. Her husband was upset about this practice and warned her that he wouldn't let her into the house until she spat in Rabbi Meir's face. Understandably, she was hesitant to do so and stayed away from her home. Rabbi Meir discovered this and to ease her discomfort acted as if an Ayin Hara has seized him, and requested that she spit at him as a remedy. While the story is cited to emphasize the importance of promoting Shalom Bayit, it serves as one of several sources for the concept of spitting in order to ward off an Ayin Hara.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe Even Ha'ezer) 3, 26

בענין עין הרע ודאי יש לחוש אבל אין להקפיד הרבה כי בדברים כאלו הכלל מאן דלא קפיד לא קפדינן בהדיה

With regards to an Ayin Hara, one should certainly take it into account, but one shouldn't be overly concerned, because about these kinds of things the rule is: "One who is not troubled by it, will not be troubled by it" (Pesachim 110b).

Emotional Insecurity

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (1865-1935, Chief Rabbi of Israel under British Mandate), explained that in order for an Ayin Hara to take effect, the affected person must be self conscious and have a low sense of self-worth, i.e., one that is based on the impressions of others:

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Ein Ayah Berachot 55

על ידי מה שהנפשות פועלות זו על זו יש מקום לעין הרעה שתפעול לרעה, אמנם לא תפעל כי אם על ידי חלישות הנפש המתפעלת, ותוכן החלישות בא על ידי מה שלא תמצא את ערך עצמה כראוי, ולא יהיו מרכז פעולותיה כי אם מבט חיצוני של העין

Because souls have the ability to impact one another, it is possible for an Ayin Hara to cause evil. However, this will not work unless the affected soul is weak, and this weakness stems from not having a healthy self-worth, and [as a result] the central focus of its activities are based on the external facade that meets the eye.

Not basing your self-concept on the impressions of others, is not only important for ones emotional stability, is also a practical way to stay clear of an Ayin Hara.

Great story:

A middle-aged man was blind in one eye and his other eye had only 20% vision. After a surgery, matters became even worse, and he couldn't see at all. His children gathered to see what kabbalah they can take on as a merit for their father. They decided that three times a day, they would have an **עין טובה**, good eye. They prayed that in the merit of their **עין טובה**, their father should have a good eye and see well.

The children discussed examples of *ayin tova*, so they would know exactly what they need to do. They said, "For example, if a neighbor is building, adding on to their home, have a good eye and be happy for them. Don't be jealous.

"Another example: If someone gets engaged, be happy for them. Don't be jealous, even if there is someone in our family who is having a hard time getting engaged."

They began this kabbalah shortly after Purim, and after Pesach, their father's eyesight returned, and he could see well. The family decided to continue with their kabbalah. A few weeks later, an astonishing miracle occurred. The father's other eye, which wasn't functioning for twelve years, started to see again.

They were doubly rewarded for their good eye.

Take-aways

- » In personal growth, the evil eye is the worst of traits, whereas adopting a good eye is the most noble of aspirations.
- » Several halachot were established as precautionary measures to avoid an Ayin Hara.
- » People often enjoy more good than they deserve. An Ayin Hara works by arousing the attribute of judgment to replace that of kindness causing them to lose that which they don't deserve.
- » Berachah is found in things that are hidden, whereas things that are made public are prone to an Ayin Hara.
- » Publicity arouses an Ayin Hara because it causes things to be seen as they are distinct from their Divine source, thereby severing their flow of Divine blessing.
- » An Ayin Hara is understood in terms of the mind's thoughts having a physical impact on others and on reality.
- » One can avoid an Ayin Hara by staying out of the public eye, taking the precautions mentioned in Halachah, davening that there should be "no ayin hara" when a discussion that may lead to one arises, and by not worrying too much about it.